CHANGES AT COOLIDGE CORNER
SINCE THE
BEACON STREET WIDENING

I was asked to write of the changes in the Coolidge Corner area since Beacon Street was widened and made into a boulevard, in 1887. In order to concentrate on a very definite geographical section, I chose to use Beacon Street from St. Paul to Marion Street and Harvard Street from Alton Place to Williams Street. The Engineering Department of the town had these maps copied for me, and they have proved very helpful.

We'll just walk along these two main streets, stopping once in a while to look down a few side streets, and take note of places of interest there.

You will notice that in addition to the numerous changes, particularly of residences, I have noted some buildings happily still standing in their places, where they were built long ago.

Quoting from Mr. Stearns' report to Brookline Historical Society, January 1914, "Coolidge Corner is recognized as an important business center, bidding fair to equal, if not exceed,the business of the so-called Village section."

Again from his report to Brookline Historical Society, January 1915:

"The town continues to grow, especially in the northern part; the increase about Coolidge Corner is most marked. A great impetus to the growth of this section of the town was given by the widening

of Beacon Street in 1887, and the establishment of the trolley line thereon. In 1886, nearly all the land north of Beacon Street was occupied by farms. There was vacant land of the farms of the Babcock, Coolidge, Griggs and Corey families. At that time, there were on the south side of Beacon Street, from St. Mary's Street to Chestnut Hill Avenue, a distance of little more than two miles, nine buildings, all but one of them wooden, and of but little value, and on the north side, twelve, three of them of brick. Today these farms are nearly covered with houses, and Beacon Street is lined for the greater part of the way with brick and stone buildings."

An item in the Chronicle for July 21, 1900, reads:

In the march of twenty short years a country corner, sleepy in its suburban security, has given place to a bustling square, passed by thousands daily, and already on the way to being one of the most important spots in Greater Boston outside of the city limits."

The very next month, August 4, 1900, a line of electric cars was opened on Harvard Street. The route was from the Allston car barns to Coolidge Corner, to Harvard Square, Washington Street, Huntington Avenue to Boylston Street, and via the subway to Park Street, Boston.

In 1936, at a meeting of the Brookline Historical Society, Miss. Helen McCleary read a paper entitled, "Coolidge Corner Fifty Years Ago". It was autobiographical. She, with her family, had moved into Brookline from Boston in 1884, and lived on Harvard Street near the corner of Williams until 1901. The McClearys found Coolidge Corner a delightfully rural place. Many others so remember it.

What happened to change it to the busy, noisy place it now is, and where are the many old homes and gardens, the farms and woods,

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which then made it beautiful?

In the first place, in 1887, not long, you see, after the McCleary family moved to Coolidge Corner, the matter of widening Beacon Street - extending and developing it into a beautiful boulevard - was much discussed. The West End Land Company, through Mr. Henry M. Whitney, owner of much property along the way, suggested that such a plan would be of advantage not only to the owners of property, but that the town itself would profit in taxes, and in better means of transportation between Brookline and Boston.

The plan was first formally brought to public attention by the petition of about a hundred citizens, on August 9, 1886, requesting the selectmen to "lay out a townway, or townways, by the side of the highway in said town, called Beacon Street, beginning at or near St. Mary's Street at the boundary line of the city of Boston, and ending at the boundary line of said city, easterly of the Chesnut Hill Reservoir, so as to make an avenue, including the present area of Beacon Street, 200 feet in width".

December 20, 1886, a town meeting was called by the selectmen, to make application to the legislature for this extension and laying out, from St. Mary's Street to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. In February 1887, an act was passed by the legislature authorizing Brookline to so alter and widen Beacon Street, and at a special town meeting, March 29, 1887, the way as laid out by the selectmen was accepted and allowed by the town. The work was begun by the contractor on Monday, May 9, 1887.

In the Chronicle of February 26, 1887, we find that "the clerk in the department of the Secretary of the Commonwealth paid a very handsome tribute to Moses Williams, Esq. in characterizing the bill

drawn up by him for the widening of Beacon Street as one of the most thoroughly guarded bills that had passed through the department for many years".

In the same issue of the Chronicle was this item:

" The people of Brookline are under obligations to Senator Glines of Middlesex for the faithful and impartial manner in which, as chairman of the committee on roads and bridges, he conducted the hearing before that committee relative to the Beacon Street enabling act. His promptness in reporting the bill asked for, his able defense of it, and his successful attempts to secure its passage in the senate, are deserving of special recognition".

Well, Beacon Street was widened, having first been laid waste, and little steam trains brought loads of gravel from everywhere. That ever-sinking hollow at the foot of the slope near St. Paul Street was filled in, so they thought, for good. The hill was graded, and everything was laid out in good shape. Car tracks were laid in the middle, a row of trees planted on each side of the tracks and on the sidewalks, and a bridle path made at one side of the tracks.

From Brookline's Trees, by Emma G. Cummings, I quote, "With two exceptions, this area, and the sidewalks, were planted with American elms. In 1937, there were 1000 elm trees in four rows as far as the town lines. The two exceptions: - Mr. Jacob W. Pierce gave 100 red oaks which were set along Corey Hill on the upper side of the lower driveway. Mr. James H. Bowditch gave more than 40 pin oaks, and these were placed in line with the red oaks".

"Electricity was then known to have been used as the power for propelling street cars, and promoters of this enterprise (Beacon Street Widening) promised electric cars on the new Beacon Street boulevard.

Thus, after repeated and costly experiments, the first successful electric street railway in the world, on a through way, was provided on our own Beacon Street".

This last statement is from Old Streets in Brookline, by Daniel G. Lacey, 1950.

By the widening of Beacon Street, that part of Pleasant Street which had crossed Beacon and extended to Harvard was cut off and absorbed into the new boulevard.

According to Mr. Curtis in History of Brookline, "The cost of making the Beacon Street boulevard was $465,000. Within six years the land in strips of 500 feet wide on each side of the street, had increased by $4,330,400.00 in assessed valuation, with a resultant increase in revenue at the tax rate of $11.80 per thousand then prevailing, of $51,000.00 a year. Economic justification of the undertaking was prompt and convincing."

All this sounds like real progress, but some of the penalties were severe, after all, for the almost rural beauty of the Coolidge Corner area has wholly gone. Year by year, the changes came, and many homes and gardens, lawns and trees are only memories, and to only the oldest of us, at that.

No buildings on the north side of Beacon Street between St. Paul and Summit Avenue had to be destroyed in the widening, but on the south side, several had to come down or be moved.

Mr. Charles H. Stearns' house was moved nearer to Longwood Avenue and Harvard Street. The Harvard School, on Pleasant Street, was torn down and never rebuilt.

Continuing, on the south side of Beacon Street:-

The Harrington house was moved to Longwood Avenue and the house

beside it, where is now the Brookline Trust building, was taken down, and Mr. George Wheeler's house at the corner of Beacon and the present Webster Street was moved to the corner of Harvard and Williams Streets. It was taken down when the Kehillath Israel School was erected, not too long ago. This house had been built on Beacon Street by William D. Coolidge when he moved from the apartment over his store in 1878.

Beyond Park Street, the Capt. Samuel Hutchinson house, a large one, was razed; also the George W. Armstrong house facing Beacon Street. Austin Benton's house at the corner of Beacon and Marion Streets was moved back and turned to face Marion Street, where it is now.

Beginning on the north side of the street let us see the changes and additions. Should I call them all improvements?

In 1916, the d'Hauteville property on Beacon Street at St. Paul, was sold and apartment houses erected. James Street, cut through the James Stearns' property to Pleasant Street, was accepted by the town in 1925, and is now lined with apartment blocks. The making of St. James Street necessitated the removal of the homes of William Stearns and Roger Merrill on Pleasant Street. Apartment buildings followed in rapid succession along Beacon Street on the James Stearns' land. On the triangle at the junction of Pleasant Street and Beacon was erected, in 1926, the fine fireproof building called Pelham Hall: stores on the ground floor and apartments above. Gone are the gardens, lawns, orchard and greenhouse of James Stearns, whose house, facing Pleasant Street, has been bought by the town and used since 1928 by the Coolidge Corner Branch Library.

Across Pleasant Street the James S. Whitney property has been wholly converted to business blocks and large garages. The Whitney house faced Pleasant Street, where now is oneof the garages. The

beautiful gardens extending along Beacon Street to Harvard gave place in 1912 to the Liggett Block of stores and offices. There is a brief history of this Whitney estate in the Proceedings of this Society for January 1913.

It was to a store in this block, at 277 Harvard Street, that the Coolidge Corner Branch Library, or Reading Room, as it was then , was moved, after its first home in Hayman's drugstore was discontinued.

Let us go back to Pleasant Street to see how the years have treated the homes there. Just beyond the Whitney place and Waldo Street, there were two houses which were taken down when the big garage, now called the Pleasant Street Garage, was built. Along the street, the lower floor is occupied by stores from Waldo Street to John Street. On the further corner of John Street still stands the house of Mr. John Stearns, whose daughter, Mrs. Young, lived there until her death two or three years ago.

Beside it is the Admiral Joseph F. Green house, now the home of Miss Caroline Fish, and beyond that are two old houses, set back from the street, owned by Leicester R. Potter since 1923. Close to the street on the lawn between these two houses is a fine specimen of an old English oak tree, which was brought from England and planted there. These two houses were bought by Mr. Potter from Mrs. E. Prescott Brackett, who lived just beyond in the third house. At the corner of Dwight Street, on Pleasant, the home of William C. Tyler, built in the 50's, was torn down about this time, to make way for more apartments.

Back on Beacon Street again, we cross Harvard and come to the corner where stood the old grocery store which gave this section its name: the store of Coolidge and Brothers, built in 1857. Mr. William

D. Coolidge lived for a time in the apartment over the store. Mr. Edward W. Baker in a paper written in 1910, reminds us that "Coolidge's grocery store at the corner was a sort of Democratic headquarters in 1861, and was called 'Copperhead Crossroads', although as time went on the name at first applied was forgotten in the loyalty shown by those identified with that center".

The Coolidges' store was finally bought by S.S. Pierce and Co. and moved west along Beacon Street as far as a wooden block built by Seth Baker, and though made over, part of it, at least, still stands there, connected with the new building, which was built in 1899, and recently modernized and beautified. A very complete history of its changes in ownership has been told by Miss McCleary in another paper in the files of this Society.

The wooden block of stores built in 1891 by Seth Baker, referred to above, burned in 1913, and at that time S.S.Pierce built in its place a block of fireproof stores and offices. In 1906, the Boulevard Post Office occupied a large space in this block.

When the Taylor house and stable, nearly opposite the building of the Brookline Trust Co., were torn down, a block of stores was erected on the land of Emily J. Northend, which was an open lot at the time of the widening of Beacon Street on the corner of Beacon and Centre. In the block at Number 1356 was Purinton's Market.

On the other corner of Centre Street stood the house of J. Emory Hoar, master of the high school and later the first librarian. In 1893, this house was moved to face Centre Street to make room for a two-storey block of stores and offices. The house is now the home of Seaton M. Sharp. The block of stores was called the Farquarson Block, as the Farquarson candy store occupied the corner.

Go up Centre Street and see, on the left, at number 16, the J. Emory Hoar house which was turned from facing Beacon Street, and on the right, number 51, is the old William Griggs farm house, which was moved from its Harvard Street location in 1919-1920.

Beyond the Farquarson Block, on land owned by Sarah Mellen in 1889, are more apartment blocks extending to Winchester Street.

On Winchester Street just beyond the apartments at the corner, is the Shailer house, and beyond that are other houses built on the old William Griggs farm property which originally covered the entire square from 320 Harvard Street through to Winchester. Centre Street, Wellman Street and Shailer Street were cut through the farm land, and many of the houses there were built by Mr. Griggs.

Way up on Winchester Street, almost to the town line, the Tobogган Club had its little building, from the roof of which the coasters cut across the Coolidge farm, until building began, and the coasting had to cease. But it was a merry sport while it lasted.

From Winchester Street to Summit Avenue on land owned by Elbridge Wason in 1889, are more apartments. On the opposite corner of Summit Avenue stood a large house with beautiful gardens. The house, built by Edward A. Raymond in 1861-62, was bought by George W. Mitton, then president of the Jordan Marsh Co., in 1893. In 1917, this became the Beacon School, but was finally torn down, and now one-storey stores line Beacon Street and apartment blocks are on Summit Avenue in the rear.

If you look up Summit Avenue you'll see on the right hand side, a block of wooden houses, painted brown, which were there before Beacon Street was widened.

We'll now return to the south side of Beacon Street. About 1890,

James A. Sawtelle built a wooden house at the corner of St. Paul Street, which still stands, now occupied by the Sturtevant Nursing Home.

About the same time, Frederick Bradley built a large brick house at 1243 Beacon Street, between the Sawtelle house and Charles Street. His widow re-married and since then the house, which still stands, has been known by her new name, the George E. Carter house. Within a year or two it has been re-modelled to serve as doctors' offices. We are grateful that a magnificent elm tree, which stands beside it, was spared, though in the middle of a parking lot.

In 1890, too, Alexander P. Sears built his wooden house on Charles Street at the corner of Beacon, and this has changed hands and has been made into a doctors' office building.

The property on the other side of Charles Street belonged to Charles H. Stearns, who, about this same time, built a wooden house facing Charles street, and rented it to Dr. J. Herbert Moore. This house, later, was moved nearer Beacon Street and was occupied by the Wightman family of tennis fame, and the vacancy filled by the erection of a colonial style brick church for the Second Unitarian Society, in 1916. When this Society merged with the Second Society in Boston, the building was sold to the Temple Sinai congregation.

It would be too bad to fail to mention the old house at 64 Sewall Avenue at the corner of Charles Street, the Edward Russell home, 1889-1908, in 1910 the home of the Misses DeBacon, and since 1926, the home of Dr. Harrison L. Harley. At 65 Sewall Avenue is the house of Willard A. Vose, of Vose Piano Co., now a nursing home.

When the Wightman house was torn down, its place was taken by a filling station.

The Brookline Post Office, built in 1935, comes next; then a

block of stores and offices; the Brookline Federal Savings and Loan Association, formerly the Coolidge Corner Co-operative Bank, in its recently erected brick building, and then the very large space occupied by the Coolidge Corner Gulf Service Station, and its parking area which extends back to Longwood Avenue.

The fine building of the Norfolk Co. Trust Co. occupies the corner of Beacon and Harvard Streets. It was erected in 1931, and a third floor added in 1948. Earlier there had been a much smaller building on this corner built for the real estate office of Frank E. Russell, in 1904-1905. The same building was afterward used by the Boulevard Trust Co. in 1910, but it was torn down when the present building was built. The Norfolk County Trust Co. is the successor to the Boulevard Trust Co.

All these buildings between Charles Street and Harvard are located on the property of Charles H. Stearns, whose home was a part of the old Sewall farm, the house built about 1767. This old house was torn down and the trees and gardens destroyed in 1937, after Mr. Stearns' death. What a pity that it sould have been sacrificed! Coolidge Corner needed a restful green spot to offset the noise and glare of the business area.

Miss McCleary has written an interesting history of this historic estate and it is in your files.

Across Harvard Street, is a new block of stores erected in 1950. At the time Beacon Street was widened, this was a vacant lot owned by Harrison Bird. In 1904, Mr. E.B. Dane erected a business block on the lot, which extended from the corner to a house owned by Dr. Moore. The corner store in this block was Dr. A. J. Hayman's drug store and it was here that the library trustees, in response to a citizens' petition,

placed a case of books, to circulate as from the public library, in January 1904. This was the beginning of the Coolidge Corner Branch Library, then only a deposit station. Miss Ethel J. Heath, who went there every morning to see how her drug clerks-become-librarians were getting along, later became the librarian of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy on Longwood Avenue in Boston.

In 1912, Mr. Hayman gave up his business, and the place was rented to Mr. Walter Paige of the Henry Savage real estate agency, and to Mr. John E. Cousens and Co., coal merchants.

In 1929, the block of stores was torn down, most of them having been vacant for a long time and the place was an eyesore. There remained only a vacant lot used as a parking place, then as a used-car market, until in 1950, the present block of modern stores was built, a fine addition to the area. One of the famous Howard Johnson restaurants occupies the large corner one.

In 1919, Mr. Dane bought Dr. J. Herbert Moore's house at 1339 Beacon Street, a large house with stores on the ground floor, built in 1901, and it was taken down to make way for the large building of the Brookline Trust Co.

Beyond this building are three large brick buildings: stores on the ground floor, and apartments above them, built on land of Frank H. Howes and John W. Shapleigh. One store was occupied, in 1890, by the grocery store of a branch of Newcomb & Frost, later taken over by B.F. Adams & Co.

In 1900, the Boulevard Post Office occupied the store at 1357 Beacon Street. Also in these buildings, do you remember, were Heald's Market and the Woman's Exchange?

We now have reached Park and Webster Streets. Across, the end of

Webster Street, were two houses at the corner of Park. The first, that of Henry Seaverns and the other a large double house, property of the heirs of Sarah J. Kingman, where Albert Cushing lived for a time until he moved to a house ~~built by Austin Benton~~, on Beacon Street near the corner of Marion, but no longer there.

The Baptist Church occupies the sites of two houses: the big double house, corner of Webster and Park, and another house on Park Street. The church was built in 1907-08, and later, to protect itself from encroaching business, the church people bought the property of Henry Seaverns, and left it an open space.

Just below the church on Park Street, was the little house, a step or two down from the sidewalk, where lived George Dearborn, a police lieutenant, well-known in town. This house is no longer there, for the ubiquitous apartments took its place.

Park Street meets Beacon at the Baptist Church corner. On the opposite corner is a block of stores on the old Hutchinson lot. Next, the "Regent", a large apartment building on the William H. Hill property, which extended back to Marion Street, where Mr. Hill's house still is.

Beyond the "Regent" was the Armstrong land. This extended through to Marion Street and Mr. George W. Armstrong, of the Armstrong Transfer Co. and of the Armstrong Dining-Room and News Co., lived for years in a house facing Marion Street. However, in 1901, he built a large house on the Beacon Street side of his lot, which was sold by his widow in 1913. The house and stable, gardens and trees are no more. In their place is a block of apartments, and beyond, on the Austin Benton land, is a block of stores which extends to the corner of Beacon and Marion Streets. Mr. Benton was a selectman for many years.

Between the apartment block and the stores is the house built by Mr. Benton for his daughter at the time of her marriage. ~~Later, Albert Cushing lived here~~.

In 1893 and 1899, Harvard Street was widened, but on a much smaller scale than was Beacon Street. Not much land was cut from properties along the way and it was unnecessary to raze or move any buildings on its account.

Beginning at Alton Place, east side of Harvard Street, on the south corner lay the Ferris estate, consisting of a large, square brick house facing Alton Place, and a magnificient, well-kept lawn from the house to Harvard Street - a wide expanse. That was one of Harvard Street's beauty spots for many years, but in 1916 the lawn was sacrificed to an apartment block, and the house became Madam Achard's School. Later, the house too was destroyed and apartments went up on Alton Place.

On the other side of Alton Place, on Harvard Street, were the house, stable and gardens of Elbridge Wason. That area is now covered with stores. Just in back of the Wason land, on Alton Place, is the home of Eliakim Littell, founder of Littell's Living Age, who, again quoting from the Curtis History of Brookline, "was perhaps the first editor to discover that a magazine could be entirely produced with no other tools than scissors and paste". The house has been here since 1884 and is now occupied by Dr. Pollock's school.

Beyond the Wason house, on Harvard Street again, was for many years a large white wooden house, with wide space in its rear, home of Mrs. Anna W. Gooding. Do you remember the big iron lions at the entrance? After her death, the house was used as the Old White House

Inn, in 1919, but not for very long. Now the house is no more, and the Elm Farm store and its large parking lot has taken its place.

Norman Court, brick apartments, corner of Harvard Street and Stearns Road, were built in 1906 on land belonging to Mary Ann Putnam. On the opposite corner of Stearns Road, where now is "The Coolidge", was, long ago, the home of "Aunt Nancy Stearns". The house is still standing but has been moved further down Stearns Road.

When we cross Stearns Road and Sewall Avenue, where they come into Harvard Street, we arrive at a flat-iron shaped brick block,- all apartments at first, but now offices as well. This was built on land of Charles Sinclair in 1901-02.

Just beyond was the house of Levi L. Wilcutt in 1887, but that too has gone to give room for more stores, with offices above.

Across Longwood Avenue is the parking lot of the Gulf Oil Company, at the corner of Harvard and Beacon Streets, which we noticed on our walk up Beacon Street.

We come again, after crossing Beacon Street, to the business blocks which cover the land of the Whitneys and that of John S. Shepherd, later of Lucy E. Hall in 1899, which brings us to Green Street. George Griggs (called Lawyer Griggs) lived in a house just below the corner of Green Street until it was torn down to make place for apartment blocks.

The house of John F. Winch on the opposite corner of Green Street, but facing Harvard, was in 1916 pushed back and turned about to face Green Street, and one-story stores were built on Harvard Street, where the house had been. The house was torn down later, and the Telephone Company has built a business office there.

Mr. Winch's house, before 1887, had been the home of the Masons, of the Mason and Hamlin Piano Company.

Several of the large houses on Green Street are being used now for convalescent homes or rooming houses, as are such houses on other streets in town.

In 1915, Brookline bought the house and land of the Zenas F. Brett heirs, remodelled the house and used it for the Coolidge Corner Branch Library until 1928, when it was sold, as was the house beyond it, that of Joseph F. Baker which had become one of the Waterman funeral homes. Blocks of stores were built on both lots, and joined to the earlier block at corner of Green Street. In front of the Brett house was a white hawthorne tree which grew to a large size while the library occupied the place. Every spring it was a glory of snow white blossoms, and in the autumn the quantity of red haws attracted many birds. One year, in particular, large flocks of cedar waxwings interested many who were passing by. In the rear, the library janitor had a garden, and the first strawberries and asparagus were always presented to the librarian, and were greatly enjoyed by her, you may be sure. The library staff raised flowers,- pansies, nasturtiums, etc., for decoration of the library desk.

A block of brick houses, apartments, was built on Babcock Street at the corner of Harvard Street, in place of the house of J. F. and Cyrus Baker. Further down Babcock Street is the house of George A. Webber and the double wooden house of Matthew McNeilly and Robert Whigham, which were here before the Beacon Street widening.

On the other corner of Babcock Street, on Harvard, where now is a large brick block of stores and offices, built about 1926, was formerly the home of Edwin A. Norton, and earlier of Grenville C. Tyler. In 1927, the Post Office occupied a store in this building, at 335 Harvard Street. The town of Brookline owns the land from here to Stedman Street, which was cut through the property of James Beals, and accepted by the town in 1898. On the town's land are three buildings of the Edward Devotion School, and also the little, old house of the Devotions, John and Edward. Much has been written about this family and house, and you know all about it. I have nothing to add.

We'll now go back, and down Harvard Street below the Corner, and on the west side, beginning at Foster Street, which is itself a new road, not an accepted street, on land of Morrill Frost. Here, we find that the Sunoco Service Station occupies the home site of John C. Abbott, later of Hatherly C. Foster. The house was razed and the orchard in the rear was destroyed about 1940, I think, or a few years earlier.

Beside this filling station is another, at the corner of Marion Street, on land formerly owned by Benjamin F. Adams, whose house on Marion Street still is standing, and in the place of a house built on part of Mr. Adams' land by Dr. Slack, a Congregational minister. This house, a large one, after the death of Dr. and Mrs. Slack, was made over into apartments, then shortly after torn down for the use of the filling station.

Looking down Marion Street we'll see, beside Mr. Adams' square wooden house, the house built by George Green, where his widow continued to live until her death in the 1920s. Further down is the

the Cabot School, no longer used as a school however, which was built on property of John Knox Marshall, who later lived on Summit Avenue, and a Mr. Walter.

On the other side of the street, back of Harvard Church, stands the Telephone Exchange, built 1916-17, where Mr. Monroe Goodspeed used to live. Mr. Goodspeed's livery stable on Washington Street opposite the Town Hall, will be remembered. The Harvard Church has been beautifully re-built, after its almost total destruction by fire in 1930. Next the church is a block of stores extending to Webster Street. Here had been the house built in 1850 by Moses Warren, but from 1859 the home of Henry L. Pierce - a wooden house on a large lot.

On Webster Street we find Young's Garage occupies much of that side of the Pierce land. Opposite it is the brick building housing an electric transformer of the Boston Elevated (Metropolitan Transit Authority). Between this building and the stores on Harvard Street is the house of Albert Bird which was turned from the corner when those stores were built.

Beyond the corner of Webster Street, on Harvard, were the two houses of Albert H. Bird and Harrison Bird. One, mentioned just now, was moved onto Webster Street. The other continued to stand in its place until fairly recently, having at the last been a photographer's studio, Mr. Jamieson's, just beyond the end of the block of stores. In 1938, the end store, made over, enlarged and with a new front, became a new home for China Inn, which had been located further up on Harvard Street in a tiny shop which it had outgrown. Beyond China Inn is Mr. Dane's new block of stores, and here we are back on Beacon Street.

Across the street, beyond the S. S. Pierce store, were, in 1902, properties of Thomas O. Selfridge, Anna B. Laighton (or Leighton) Emily G. Seaverns, and Laura Hallett, before reaching the farm of William J. Griggs, which extended from there to Williams Street, formerly called Second Street.

Mr. Selfridge lived in Washington, D. C. and prior to 1890 his house was the home of Rev. Ruen Thomas, minister of Harvard Church. He used to pasture his horse in the large lot in the rear, which extended to Centre Street, property of Emily Northend. When Dr. Thomas moved to a house he had built on Rawson Road, Dr. Cooper lived here until the house was taken down, when he moved to a house on Marion Street at the corner of Park. This one, which has gone now to make room for apartment blocks, had earlier been occupied by Grenville Tyler, grandfather of selectman Dan Tyler.

In 1906, the Beacon Universalist Society erected a large building opposite Green Street, on the properties of Anna Laighton, Emily Seaverns and Laura Hallett, combining its church auditorium and other rooms on the upper floor, with a ground floor of stores. One of the stores was Buxbaum's Market, which brings to mind the remark of a small boy who, when asked where he attended Sunday School, replied "I go to Buxbaum's church!" Some years later, this church society disbanded, and after much heated discussion, debates, petitions, etc., a movie theatre was at last, in 1933, permitted to remodel this building into a theatre, retaining stores on the ground floor.

Now we have reached the old William Griggs property, or rather what remained after a good deal had been sold for house lots and streets cut through. This was where the farm house stood until, when Brewster Terrace was built, about 1915, it was moved back and turned to face Centre Street, where it remains.

Mr. Griggs died in May, 1906, having served the town as selectman for eight years; also he had been Overseer of the Poor. He was an ardent supporter of the Baptist Church and contributed largely to the new building.

About 1920, Dr. Everett W. Bowker, whose wife was a daughter of Mr. Griggs, built a house and garage on the lot just south of Brewster Terrace, and opposite Babcock Street. After his death, the house was sold, stores were erected and the family moved to Blake Park and later to Evans Road. The whole of the Harvard Street part of the William Griggs farm is now covered with stores and other business buildings, including the Arcade Building and the Jewish Community Center, excepting only the apartment blocks at the corner of Shailer St

We are almost at the end of our walk, as Williams Street meets Harvard on the edge of the Griggs property, but for just a moment look beyond the Synagogue on the opposite corner, and see the house at 390 Harvard Street. It is the Jonathan L. Dexter home, which Mr. Dexter bought in 1885. It had been occupied by the Cobb and the Getchell families before the Dexters, so it must be pretty old. It is now occupied by a son and a daughter of Mr. Dexter.

We have traversed the streets in the Coolidge Corner area, and have seen how business has crowded and is continuing to crowd out the homes and open spaces. On Beacon Street, west from Harvard, there is a tendency to utilize many street-floor apartments for business, even by building show windows out to the sidewalk. Thus business extends itself almost the whole length of Beacon Street, and the same is true of Harvard.

It is not hard to understand why Coolidge Corner developed so rapidly after Beacon Street was made so wide, straight and beautiful an approach from Boston, and there was for a long time plenty of parking space for shoppers, which Boston did not have. Naturally, so much business activity has resulted in an almost unbelieveable increase in land and building values.

Would you go back to the "good old days"?

I wish to acknowledge the curtesy of the

Engineering Department, which had parts of two large maps copied for me;

Assessors Department, which gave me personal access to all the old tax lists and atlases;

Building Department, which took time to ferret out dates of building and moving of buildings.

I have had very pleasant and profitable talks with:-

Miss Helen McCleary
Miss Mary L. Dexter
Mrs. Lucy Griggs Bowker
Mr. Carl Goodspeed
Mrs. Margaret Sears Atwood
Mr. Leicester P. Potter

Other authorities:

Files of the Brookline Chronicle

The Chronicle. Souvenir of Brookline's Bicentennial.

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Lilla D. Morse

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